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Hornsey Public Libraries

Editorial

TO all our readers and contributors we extend our best wishes for the New Year. Our especial thanks are due to those members in the Forces who have found time to write articles and letters: of three articles printed in this issue, one is from India, another from Italy, and a third from the Home Forces.

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The adoption of a new and broader constitution by the National Book Council (now the National Book League), and the formulation of an ambitious Three-Year plan of development, may do much to help librarians in their work. The effect of the changes in the constitution will be to throw open membership to the full reading public. Too many people," said Mr. G. Wren Howard, "in the past had been shy of books, bewildered by their variety, ignorant of how to get information of them. It was the task of the National Book League to remedy this." These are laudable objects, and ones which we can all support.

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Librarians, as a whole, seem to have been reluctant to take any active steps regarding the shortage of books. A recent correspondence in *The Times* produced letters from Mr. Esdaile and one signed by the librarians of six of our largest cities. But if the Library Association has been represented on any recent deputations to the Paper Controller, the fact has had no publicity. It seems high time that Public Libraries should be allowed some priority to buy important new books: the ridiculous scramble necessary to obtain a book like Trevelyan's *English social history* is a case in point.

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The Index to the 1944 volume is in course of compilation, and will be sent out with the March-April issue to subscribers. Individual members who wish to obtain copies of the Index should apply to Mrs. S. W. Martin, Carnegie Library, Herne Hill Road, S.E.24, enclosing a stamped addressed envelope. Applications should not be made to the Editor.

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Council Notes

THE A.A.L. Council met on the 1st of November, 1944, the President (Mr. J. T. Gillett) in the Chair.

Statements of income and expenditure for January to October, 1944, and estimates for 1945 were submitted by the Hon. Treasurer.

The Hon. Membership Secretary reported 103 new members, 162 reinstatements and 463 defaulters and resignations.

The Education Committee met before the Council Meeting, and the Hon. Education Secretary reported that there were 313 entries for the Courses starting in November, a slight decrease on last year. Two new tutors had been accepted, but another Classification tutor was urgently needed.

The Hon. Editor reported that three A.A.L. publications would soon be unobtainable, Sayers' *First steps in annotation* being already out of print and Sayers' *Classification* and Phillips' *Primer of book classification* nearly so. Estimates are to be obtained for reprinting.

Mr. Gardner reported that *Sequel stories* would be ready for printing in the spring of 1945.

A large part of the meeting was spent in discussion with the Hon. Secretary of the Library Association, who attended the Council. Various questions raised by the A.A.L. Council were dealt with, the principal matters being the holding of a General Meeting of the Association, the reconstitution of the L.A. Council, and the implementation of the Proposals for Post-War Organization. The Hon. Secretary also gave arrangements for Future Professional Training, particularly the setting up of library schools in various parts of the country.

Why Classify?

B. I. Palmer

WHEN I was serving with the R.A.F. in India in 1942-43, I was appointed "Librarian" to my station, a small unit of fifty men stationed a few miles from Madras. This appointment required my attendance from time to time at the headquarters of the War Charities Committee, from which I was permitted to draw up to thirty books at a time. The main reservoir of books was quite large, and was contained in a series of cases, cupboards and bookshelves, in no recognizable order. They were divided into "Penguins and other paper-covered works" and "other books." Can you imagine the amazing jumble that this represented? Fiction and non-fiction were hopelessly mixed up, with no attempt at arrangement by author, title or subject. My comrades read mostly detective stories, and I used to provide 16 of these out of every 30 books: the rest I tried to divide between reasonably good fiction, and non-fiction to meet the tastes of everyone. It was a common experience for me to be asked for a specific work, like Cedric Belfrage's *Away from it all*, or Quentin Reynold's *Don't think it hasn't been fun*, or a book on a special subject like *Russia*, or *The Indian political problem*. Being a librarian by vocation as well as appointment, I naturally did my best to carry out the law of library science which Ranganathan¹ enunciated as "To every reader his book," but I suffered many heart

¹ Ranganathan (S. R.): *Five laws of library science*, 1931.

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searchings, and spent a great deal of precious spare time trying to live up to my professional standards.

Since my "public" was uninstructed in the intricacies of library organization, I was expected to be able to satisfy their requests with the ease of a conjuror producing rabbits from a hat, and my pride forbade me to admit defeat until I had exhausted myself in search. This meant, then, that I had to scrutinize carefully every one of several thousands of books to find those my readers wanted, and I believe that I first realized then the truth of Sayer's^a statement that "a huge room full of books is, in fact, about the nearest representation of chaos that we can imagine." I think, too, that I realized then for the first time that in insisting upon the vital nature of classification I had never been guilty of pedantry. Indeed, I began to think that I had not insisted enough upon its fundamental importance to librarianship. On the whole, I was able to satisfy my readers' requests fairly well, but at what a cost in time and patience! I only made my visit once a fortnight, and on behalf of a mere fifty readers: try to conceive the plight of a librarian performing the task of selecting the books from a heterogeneous jumble for two hundred times as many readers. He would require an enormous body of helpers, and many of his readers would go to their graves with their requirements unsatisfied. Another of Ranganathan's five laws crops up here: "Save the time of the readers," and its corollary, "Save the time of the staff." How much I would have been spared if only the books had been arranged in a definite order, or at least grouped under suitable headings such as "Detective fiction," "Novels," "Plays and poetry," "Travel Books," and "Biographies." Thus, even in the choice of a few books for a very unsophisticated public, classification is demonstrated to be desirable, if not essential.

When, in order to avoid such waste of time by both reader and librarian, we attempt to arrange books in some order, we are presented with a choice of several methods. Omitting such obviously useless groupings as by colour of bindings, or by size of books (although it must not be overlooked that an interior decorator, or the, by now, legendary millionaire who wished to fill a space in his bookshelves, ought not to consider such groupings useless), we can arrange by authors, titles, series, and subject, to name but four criteria. Any of these is quite legitimate (as, indeed, is any useful arrangement), but one of them only can be used at a time, and we have to decide which is best. Now, in deciding upon any method of executing a task, the only rational attitude must always be "What do I require of it?" otherwise one is liable to land into all sorts of trouble. So, we will now proceed to discover what is required of a system of arrangement.

Since the primary function of a library is to meet the needs of its readers, our requirements in the matter of book-arrangement must be largely governed by their needs. Our only method of assessing their needs is to notice the forms their requests take, and draw our conclusions from these. In the main, enquiries for books in a library can be divided into six headings:—

1. Any book by a stated author.
2. A specific book by a stated author.
3. A specific book (author not given).
4. A specific book by a stated author on a given subject.
5. A specific book (author unnamed) on a given subject.
6. Any book on a given subject.

^a Sayers (W. C. Berwick): *Manual of classification*, 1926.

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Of these requests, numbers 1, 2 and 4 can be satisfied by an author arrangement, numbers 2, 3, 4 and 5 (and, where the title is not obscure or misleading, 6 also) by a title arrangement; and numbers 4, 5 and 6 (and, where the title is not obscure or misleading, 2 and 3 also) by a subject arrangement. From this it would appear superficially that a title arrangement would satisfy more enquiries than either author or subject arrangement; but other factors creep in to correct this view. First of all, title arrangement relies upon the title of a book remaining constant. Now, apart from deliberate changes made by publishers in various editions, or from such annoyances as differences in titles as between America and England, there are countless examples of books whose popularly accepted titles are different from the official titles as they appear in the books themselves. This occurs most frequently in such well-known books as *The adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *The life and adventures of Robinson Crusoe*, where the hero's name becomes so embedded in the public mind as to overshadow the qualifying phrase "adventures of." But any cataloguer can multiply such examples a hundredfold. In addition to such quite rational anomalies, endless troubles arise from titles inaccurately repeated from memory, whether the enquirer's own, or that of a friend or a mentor who has advised him to read a given book. There is no need to give examples of such lapses: We have all been guilty of them at times. Considering these difficulties, we are forced to conclude that of the three approaches to books, author, title and subject, title-approach is the least satisfactory, in as much as the title is the least stable characteristic of a book.

The author-approach is considerably more stable. In the majority of cases, the author is easily discernible, and in very few cases, comparatively speaking, is there any likelihood of the wrong part of his name being chosen in the case of English names? But when we come to foreign names, the story is different. Of course, there are rules for the choice of the part of the name in both the Anglo-American and Cutter's codes or rules for cataloguers, and these can readily be used in arranging actual books; but how is the reader to learn the rule, except by trial and error? And what is to be done about Indian names,¹ for example, where no two authorities appear to agree? Author-approach is also liable, though not to the same extent, to suffer from the vagaries of English spelling and bad memories. There are three ways of spelling "Stevens" at least, and I would not care to calculate the varieties of "Phillips," and such examples can be multiplied indefinitely. As for the difficulties caused by bad memories, they are legion, and if the memory is very bad, then the book is effectively lost in an author arrangement.

But when we turn to arrangement by subject, what a different picture we see! In the world of books where, so far, we have found two commonly-accepted concepts to shift as the sands, we at last find a rock upon which to build. The title of a book may change on a transatlantic crossing, but its subject remains the same: the borrower's memory may be atrocious, but he knows the subject in which he is interested; the author's name may be difficult to grasp, or susceptible to a variety of spellings, but when the choice of books is narrowed down to a mere half dozen or so on any small topic, then the task of identifying it is considerably lessened. In view of this, the mere quantitative assessment of the comparative values of the arrangements, author, title and subject, has to give way to the more accurate qualitative evaluation. We come thus unflinchingly to the conclusion that the most useful order in which to arrange books is the one based on their most constant attribute—their subjects. A counterpart

¹ Sivaraman (K.M.): Madras Library Association, Memoirs, 1940.

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to this choice of a constant will be discovered later when we come to consider the choice of characteristic used in a classification. This conclusion we find gives additional support from the fact that, in non-fiction, at least, the reader-approach is most frequently subjectual.

Having said this, however, we have not said all. It is not enough merely to decide to use the subjects of books as the basis of our arrangement of them : we have to decide in what order we shall arrange the subjects, and once again our criteria must be utility and permanence. "Permanence" is used relatively here, knowledge is so fluid that we cannot hope to fix any order to endure for all time : we can only find some order which meets our present needs, and anticipates the future intelligently in view of present trends. What are the possible arrangements of subjects available to us ? —Alphabetical order, based on the accidental relationship between the initial letters of the words chosen to name the subjects (or the "terms"), and some other order based upon a more vital relationship between subject and subject.

It is easy to discountenance alphabetical order. No two persons would be likely to agree in their choice of terms for a hundred subjects, and certainly not in the coverage, so to speak, of each individual term. Consider the following subjects :—

ANALYSIS (Calculus), NEBULÆ (Astronomy), OCCULT SCIENCES.

In an alphabetical arrangement, the first would be widely separated from mathematical works, in which its practitioners are vitally interested. In regard to the second, the reader who wanted a book about the Milky Way would be hard put to it unless he knew more than the average man about astronomy. As for the third, what would one expect to find here besides the more obvious topics such as Astrology, Palmistry, etc. ? There is another point which arises here also. In any list of subjects, there will be tremendous variations in the extension of the terms. Some will denote specific subjects, such as Lithographic Printing, or Bookkeeping, while others will be all-embracing, like Mathematics or Chemistry. Examine any list of subject headings for a dictionary catalogue, all of which derive ultimately from the terms in an earlier edition of Dewey, and you will see at once the truth of this statement and how misleading it makes alphabetical subject arrangement.

There is a further consideration in connection with alphabetical order : it depends upon a conventional arrangement of the western alphabet, which is quite arbitrary. When I was a child, we began learning to read and write with the A.B.C. Now, I find letters are learned in groups according to the way in which they are arranged, far less emphasis is laid on the alphabet. The letters are arranged in groups according to the way in which they are pronounced, as gutturals, dentals, labials, and while this is doubtless extremely valuable as a teaching method, it often leaves the child very hazy about alphabetical order. Tradition, in the form of A.B.C. picture-books and parental "chants," still helps the youngster to remember the arbitrary order : but what of the days to come, when the tradition has all but died out ? I understand that a certain commercial college includes alphabetization in its curriculum for would-be secretaries : which indicates that "as easy as A.B.C." is no longer true in arranging office papers !

So we are left with "some other order based upon a more vital relationship between subject and subject," and it is the discovery of this vital relationship which has occupied makers of classification for generations, and will do so till the end of time. But do

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not despair : we have achieved enough for our own lifetime at least, and one scheme shows considerable promise for the future. Observation of the literature of various subjects has revealed that they tend to be studied in certain "clusters" with some degree of external relationship between the clusters and a general name to distinguish each cluster from the next. Thus, we have Science, which observes and records natural phenomena, and Useful Arts, which applies the knowledge thus gained. We have Philosophy, which deals with thought in general, and Religion, which deals with thought in relation to God. These clusters, or "classes," as they are called in classification, can be arranged in any order we like, and different schemes show different orders, but each one is endeavouring to follow a principle enunciated by Ranganathan¹ as "The canon of helpful order," and is part of our attempt to anticipate the needs of our readers. A theory has been advanced that "it doesn't matter whereabouts in a scheme a subject occurs, as long as it is adequately indexed." There is just sufficient truth in this to make it dangerous : but carried to its logical conclusion, it throws all the weight on the index, and brings us back to the condition of alphabetic-subject arrangement, but with an extra redundant step inserted.

I have actually worked with a rule-of-thumb scheme, where later arrivals in the way of subjects had to be squeezed in wherever room could be found, and when I refute the "Index" arrangement, I do so from experience, not theory. Certain subjects sort conveniently together from the user's viewpoint, and it is our duty to see that our arrangement of books in those subjects come together also.

Bubble Reputation

J. F. W. Bryon

"THE serving man has fresh needs. . . . He is keener than ever before to keep abreast with his general and vocational interests so that the war may not leave him unfitted for the peace. *This has been generally recognized by the Library Association and by all librarians and library authorities.*" (L. R. McColvin : *Public library system of Great Britain*, 1942, p. 211.)

In taking the above quotation as text, I wish to thank, on behalf of many inarticulate, those library authorities and staffs who have realized the potentialities and their responsibilities, and have made extraordinary provision to meet the extraordinary need. My own personal experience while in the Forces has been limited to the service and stock of Belfast, Wakefield, Yeovil, Woolwich, Portsmouth, Southampton, Hove, Brighton, Eastbourne and Bury St. Edmunds, but as I have found in these, so, I have been told, has similar generous-mindedness been met in other areas. The specialized needs of Service units and individuals are difficult to provide with diminishing staffs, shortened hours and scarcity of books, but for the much that has been done we who have experienced the efforts made are grateful. For the abuse of facilities granted and for occasional breaches of faith exhibited by the Services I apologize. Little can be pleaded in extenuation save ignorance concerning the ways of books and the exigencies of the Service. To what extent appreciation of services rendered will take practical form in post-war public support a prophecy would be rash, but certainly public libraries have made many friends during the war through their contacts with serving men and women, and some means whereby they may make more are outlined below.

In the Army a revolutionary experiment is being carried out. When trained men

¹ Ranganathan (S. R.) : *Prolegomena to library classification*, 1937.

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are required for any particular task, the Army method is to select suitable candidates and send them on a course of duration adequate to the end in view. It has been decided that men and women are needed as citizens, and as it is manifestly impossible at this stage in hostilities to remove hundreds of thousands from their military duties, the course is being brought to them in weekly periods of one hour, under the title of "British Way and Purpose." That in the middle of total war it should be considered practicable to do this is very surprising and encouraging, and the eager response evoked augurs well for the future.

If the Army, which is not notorious for the extremeness of its ideas, can be so far-sighted, then what can public libraries do to aid them? The need is evident now, and will increase enormously as soon as the Armistice terms are signed, when, pending demobilization, men and women will need all the educational and cultural facilities it is possible to provide. It should be unnecessary to stress to librarians the need for contact with books, or the ignorance concerning library facilities exhibited by many. What does need emphasis is the scope for work with Army Education Corps personnel and their counterparts in the other Services. Each one of these has one or more units to look after—often, in the case of A.A. or Searchlights, sub-units are many miles apart, and in order to do as much work with men as is desirable, it is necessary for them to cut down the amount of preliminary investigation preparation and survey of subjects to a minimum. The A.E.C. always labour under difficulties. What can be done toward resolving them?

Official subject-pamphlets contain booklists, which resemble closely those which used to be published in the *Library Association Record*. But every public library has alternatives on the shelves. It might be an idea to list them for any education sergeant or officer who asks for assistance. Quite a number will be unfamiliar with the classification used—show them—they will be grateful for advice. L.A.R. lists, avowedly, are not exhaustive, and local complementary or supplementary lists from stock would be very helpful.

In addition to the above, an exhibition of the books held on the current topic under discussion, together with information in such subsidiary forms as magazine articles, illustrations and pamphlets, and references to standard works, encyclopædias, etc., will be welcome.

Among every library's borrowers are experts in many fields of knowledge. If you will act as liaison officer by putting A.E.C. personnel in touch with them, neither party, for the most part, will regret the contact. Here the specialist knowledge of the junior staff will be invaluable. In such matters as these, Army personnel are often surprisingly diffident and ignorant, assuming the gulf between uniform and civilian clothes quite unbridgeable. Act as liaison, too, wherever possible, between the Services and local cultural amenities. Men in the Forces are still interested in breeding rabbits, stamp collecting, radio, music and so on. If there is a local philatelic society, amateur dramatic society, music circle, debating club, put them in touch.

Some of these may not now be available: many such have had to close for the duration, but there are one or two of the original enthusiasts left. They, and the Forces, would be grateful if you can form the link. Books alone are not enough—there must be kindred spirits. And this is where the library may be of invaluable assistance, in providing the permanent core, the nucleus round which Service activities may form themselves, so that postings or large troop movements need not spell finis

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for all that has been begun. There are rarely enough individuals in each unit to render such activities practicable, but by combining the demands of all Service units stationed nearby a workable number would be obtained.

Accommodation is bound to be a problem in this connection. But if the library has none to offer (and surely the Council would sanction one department one night per week for lectures or debates?), it has at least knowledge of what room there is locally that has been used for these and similar purposes, knows whom to ask, the conditions imposed and the terms expected. But the library is the ideal, because equipped for the job with epidiasscope, illustrations, radio, gramophone, books.

There enters into all this the question of hours of opening. For most public libraries nowadays close at the time when Service personnel have their leisure. The writer is debarred from access to a fine stock by this very fact. There are sound excuses, it is admitted. But for some unaccountable reason they do not apply to the continued opening of public houses, dance halls and cinemas until late at night on six evenings per week. Is it too much to hope that libraries may open for an hour or two on one well-advised evening per week, so that this discrimination against culture may not operate?

Many libraries house gramophone clubs and the like. It would be doing the Forces a great service if it were to be intimated that not only would a welcome be extended to Service personnel, but also if it were known that on application a programme of records would be played in nearby units' own accommodation. There are difficulties in the way of this, but an approach through the usual channels would soon smooth out things.

More ambitious A.E.C. people attempt "Feature Programmes" for which they need records, illustrations and other material. The library can provide them. Plays are read by units with a great deal of success. Advice and assistance in obtaining expert help should be forthcoming in the library. Some stoics overcome the arduous of Service conditions enough to study—either general subjects, or with a vocational aim in view. Libraries may help by suggesting text books or volumes for further reading.

It may be of assistance to librarians to know some of the other activities undertaken by live education officers and warrant officers, for which they may be in need of assistance. Training in technical matters, as map reading, aircraft recognition, internal combustion engines, radio engineering, electrical circuits and so on, requires suitable books of all grades of difficulty. Hints for hikers *might* receive an audience.

Lectures are given by members of the unit and by civilian lecturers, for which follow-up reading might be suggested and provided. Weekly discussions on current affairs, domestic and international, are held in all units, and here again suitable books might be recommended. Unit libraries are provided in many areas, from voluntary sources, but in many instances aid in assistants' spare time would be accepted gratefully in such things as classification of non-fiction, advice on methods of registering issues and other professional matters of a similar nature. In one education centre in the vicinity of the writer there is a two-volume Plato divided by its zealous but misguided cataloguer.

A large amount of practical work and hobby pursuit is followed in an increasing number of units. The men and women find a new satisfaction in rugmaking, weaving, leatherwork, carpentry, gardening, basket and model making. Simple text books

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will be an obvious provision. Local lore, particularly of an historical nature, on customs, dialect and antiquities, will find a limited public.

On the whole, the provision of recreational books can be left to Service organizations, who have access to large stocks, though additions to these are always welcomed through the usual channels. The organization in existence isn't adequate, or fully appreciated, as witness the fact that isolated sites still go without books in all too many instances, and often where books are provided they resemble in the aggregate the residue in the penny tray outside a second-hand shop, despite the frequent and much-publicized appeals. But that is Service matter rather than civilian.

One of the main problems faced by the soldier, moving from unit to unit, or from area to area, is that of orientation. In the infrequent and invariably awkward hours off duty it is difficult to discover the full extent of cultural and educational amenities provided in the new district, and complete knowledge of where and when the local societies meet, hold recitals, lectures, etc., often takes as long as a month or six weeks, by which time he is fortunate if he has not been moved again. This period has been so much time wasted, and could probably be reduced considerably if facilities were provided in the form of an information bureau, which should provide the following essential "gen"—address and hours of canteens, addresses and terms of hostels, train and bus timetables, local map and directory, and comprehensive information on Forces clubs, groups, societies, etc., in the district. The name and address of the local Welfare Officer is another indispensable, together with the addresses of secretaries of Families' Aid Association, and local cultural, recreational and sporting clubs, associations and societies, while it will be advisable to have up-to-date information on all local entertainments, concerts, lectures, meetings, football matches and the like. Here is a service that librarians can perform outside hours, where it is not possible for the library to remain open in the evening (for that it is the natural repository of such information), and wherever possible it should be conducted in connection with extant canteens or hostels. Preferably, a basic extract of the information provided should be circulated to all units in the area, and here the good offices of the Welfare Officer will overcome the security danger, thus enabling the peripatetic soldier to feel at home in your district as soon as he arrives.

This point of provision for the serious-minded serving man and woman has been stressed because it is considered important. Librarians still fortunate enough to be pursuing their civilian tasks may sometimes be afraid that they are doing little to further the war effort. Let them be assured that there is no difference between their duties and those of the munition makers, for both are helping to provide the means to war against intolerance, ignorance, evil, suppression of the truth and propaganda. If freedom of access to knowledge is allowed to be limited, then this war will have been lost. It is vital that these precious lines of communication with the past and the present be held. Only thus can the front line be certain of holding against the stress of what is, in the final estimate, a spiritual and moral assault.

A Letter from Canada

G. B. Keene

I AM sending you a necessarily hasty résumé of points in American and Canadian library facilities. It consists of things noted in often hurried visits which I was lucky enough to be able to make while stationed in the two countries. It is neither

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a statement nor criticism of average facilities. It may be of interest to readers conversant with existing conditions in England.

An outstanding feature of the libraries over here is the absence of classified catalogues. Out of fourteen different libraries, I found, with the exception of Cleveland Public Library, one classified catalogue. This was in the department of engineering literature in Pittsburgh Carnegie Library, and was arranged by the Brussels Expanded Decimal System. There is also a very broad outlook with regard to exploitation of books and general library policy. Most noticeable is the importance attached to juvenile library administration. The co-operation between the library and local education authorities in Buffalo is carried to the extent of personal co-operation with school-teachers in book selection. The public libraries at Toronto and at Cleveland, Ohio, provide two different juvenile libraries, for youngsters and for more advanced school children—arranging book selection in the latter to coincide with classwork syllabus.

There were some very varied library buildings to be seen. The public library at Pensacola occupies a small disused church, the counter being in front of the East end, and the bookcases placed at right angles to and on either side of the aisle. The vestry served as the librarian's office, and a very solemn atmosphere prevailed. The library of the University at Pittsburgh, Penns., occupies several floors of the 42-story Cathedral of Learning. The arts and sciences were segregated by floors. Another very modern library is the public library in Detroit. It is a large handsome building of white stone surrounded by lawns and trees—rare sights in the city—standing an oasis of learning in a desert of commercialism. The inside is no less imposing. The catalogue of the reference library has a room to itself—the drawers being placed round the walls.

The lending department of the Toronto Public Library is well designed in that there are no floor cases. Lightness and roominess are the result. The books themselves are arranged in alternate tiers of fiction and non-fiction, and the issue counter is in the adjoining hallway. The Chicago Public Library is a block-like rectangular shaped building with the lending library and special departments on the ground floor, and reference library above. The special libraries—music, juvenile, slides, etc.—branch off a corridor running from end to end. Although not all the lending stock is displayed, it is amply catalogued. Montreal Bibliothèque Publique is the only library I found where no books were on display. It is a good example of the faith the librarian places in the public's use of the catalogue, which is of the dictionary type. The major problem of the librarian in this city is the considerable French element, necessitating the duplication of much of the stock. The Redpath Library of McGill seems to find less difficulty in this respect, probably because its stock is so much more specialized. In Quebec, where the French element is even larger—larger, in fact, than the English—there is no public library proper. The Library of the Provincial Parliament is an excellent substitution, and, apart from the small specialized library of the Quebec Literary and Historical Society, seems to be the only available access to the realms of literature.

Despite the generally accepted idea, over here, that English Service men are more addicted to reading than American Service men, the standard of library facilities at the U.S. Naval Air Stations to which I was posted was exceptionally high, in the administration as well as in the size and quality of the stock. In one case it was almost up to the standard of our municipal branch library. I mention this as an example of both professional and popular attitude towards library facilities in America.

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Finally a word about Cleveland Public Library as representing the advanced stage in public library economy. It has a fully centralized administration of 32 branches and numerous school and smaller branches, occupying the whole of the fourth floor. The building is advantageously situated on the shores of Lake Erie, and the stock of the main library is one and a quarter million. The juvenile department alone has a stock of 80,000, and is administered by a specially trained staff. It is housed in two rooms, named respectively "The Lewis Carroll Room" and "The Stevenson Room"—the first for youngsters and the second for the older children. High ceilings softly decorated, artistic furnishing with quiet ornaments and special names for each room throughout the library result in a pleasant atmosphere.

The main divisions of Dewey provide the classification basis for each of the non-fiction departments, which are separated, and administered by staff specially trained in each subject. The science and useful arts are merged. They are arranged in a sequence of connected rooms, round the reading room, which is central. There is a separate counter for the return of books and shelves for returned books to be "picked over" before being replaced. The issue system is practically self-issue, being based to some extent on the integrity of the borrower. Different-coloured slips are used for different lengths of loan. Reference and circulating books are mixed in all departments, and catalogued together for each subject.

The chief special collection is the John White Collection of Oriental Literature. This includes a room of antique library remains and bibliographical curiosities exhibited in glass cases. The music library included a sound-proof room containing a gramophone and a baby grand, and a multi-listening earphone apparatus for selecting gramophone records. The sheet music was lightly but neatly bound in card, and stored in cabinets.

Every available opportunity was taken to exploit the book stock. In each corridor were exhibit cases for appropriate book covers and pictures, kept scrupulously up to date. A "War Information Centre" counter was organized to deal with all topical queries on that subject.

I do not feel in a position to draw any critical conclusions by comparison with English libraries, since I have seen fewer of these.

As Others See Us

M. S. Crouch

THE disadvantages attached to being a member of H.M. Forces are legion; for the librarian, however, there is one advantage, for his call-up picks him up and drops him, none too gently, into the middle of the public for which he professes to cater.

The Army of to-day is indeed a microcosm. In a single unit one gets a fair representative selection of the classes and types which go to make up our modern society—very slightly regimented and coarsened by their setting, it is true, but in broad terms a collection of civilians—who fit into their setting as well (or ill) as their uniforms fit them.

It is therefore an experience, and a salutary shock, to mix on equal terms with the public, and to realise what a very small section of that public one encounters in library work. I, for example, in the course of three years' service, have met perhaps ten men

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who as civilians made regular use of a public library, and of them two or three had a fair idea of the scope of library service and of its importance to the country. To my reply to the inevitable question: "What were you in Civvy Street?" the usual reaction is a startled and/or commiserating look and words which I cannot hope to have reproduced in *The Library Assistant*. To the average civilian in uniform a librarian is something freakish and a library a place to enter, if at all, for a novel or to read a paper.

I do not find this a comforting thing, nor am I any happier to find libraries occupying such a retired place in the many schemes of planning, both national and local. It seems clear that in the eyes of the planners, libraries hold a lower priority than public lavatories and sewage farms. Having in the past been fooled by the enthusiasm and intelligence of the library users with whom I have had personal contact into believing that the library service was a live and well-appreciated one, I cannot feel very happy in contemplation of the reality of complete indifference to libraries on the part of both authority and the mass of population.

Whose fault is this? I am driven to the conclusion that the profession itself must bear a large proportion of the blame. We have been too content with moderate standards; our planning and our publicity has lacked conviction, imagination and vision; we have been satisfied with a low standard of intelligence and education among new recruits to the profession (as low, almost, as their salary scales). In fact, it has not disturbed us sufficiently that a considerable number of our libraries are bad and our staffs uninspiring.

I am cut off from up-to-date information about libraries. One thing I have seen, and that is recent reports of L.A. Examinations. If anyone believes that everything is even moderately right with the library world, he should study the report on the Elementary Examinations. Plainly we are not getting the right type of junior, and the junior is the foundation of the library staff and, rightly or wrongly, the person with whom the general public comes most into contact. If he/she is stupid or incompetent, then the library service will be condemned accordingly. (I am not forgetting the extent of the Elementary syllabus or the difficulty of working in inconvenient and brief hours of leisure; but it is plain that many juniors lack one of the librarian's main essentials—a precise and accurate memory).

I have not seen the L.A.'s post-war plans in full. (Medicos in the Forces received with their copies of the White Paper on National Medical Services a questionnaire on their reactions to the proposals—a democratic expedient which might have been imitated.) But I cannot help wondering if they will be fundamental enough. A public service is useless unless it reaches the public, and in this respect I feel that the library service has failed in the past and, unless something drastic is done, will fail in the future. Two things are essential. (1) Put our house in order by raising infinitely higher the standard of staff and the quality of service. (2) Tell the world in no uncertain tones and with all the resources of modern publicity what we have to offer. It is no use publicising a bad service, and no use having a good service if no one knows about it. And the plan must be wholehearted and positive. Otherwise we may as well settle down to issuing our romances to sex-starved spinsters, bickering with our committees over minor items of expenditure, and hearing our juniors misleading an unappreciative public with ill-informed advice.

To the general public public libraries mean precisely nothing. It is no belittlement

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of the excellent service supplied by many libraries to say that, looking round the country as a whole, I am not surprised. But thousands of men who have never read much more than the headlines of an evening paper are now, in hut, tent, or hole in the ground, reading widely and appreciatively. These are the men who will use a library service if they can be convinced that it is worth using. This is our opportunity, if we care to be bold enough to take it.

Prisoners Need Books

D. H. H.

NOT only prisoners of war, who are in everyone's thoughts, but civil prisoners too, who still forfeit with their freedom the remembrance of most of their fellows.

In 1941, on admission to one of the London prisons, I registered as a library assistant, and, much to my surprise, was put to work in the library. What I found there made me want to burst into the professional press, till, to my shame, I came upon the report of a Conference discussion¹ which had hitherto escaped my notice. The essence of the system as I found it was that a man's books were changed in his absence. Last week's went on one end of the tray and this week's came off the other. If he were privileged he might ask for particular books, and might receive them; but the age of the stock and confusion on the catalogue made this uncertain. Or he might have books sent from outside, but these would become prison property. Not once in the four months I was there did we draw on the central pool at Wakefield; and when to meet a request for some technical manual I could find nothing published this century, and suggested we should ask the borough library to help, the library officer (himself a reader there) was aghast at such daring.

In 1942 in the very prison described at the Conference, but with a different Governor, librarian, and book-stock, I sampled the same system from the other side of the counter. In self-defence (and knowing one request was better than a list) I asked for a Shakespeare—and got it, too. But that was after three weeks of importunity: as landing-cleaner I was able to pester the library party on their weekly round.

So this year in Durham I was prepared for anything—except to find a clean, modern, and orderly collection of 1,200 volumes, and to choose my books from among them. There seemed to be about 200 novels left of the original stock after a ruthless spring-cleaning, and the remaining thousand books were provided by the County Library. These covered the whole range of literature from *The outline of modern knowledge* to *The Oxford book of modern verse*, and I wish I could have made so good a choice.

Now Durham was not mentioned at the Conference, and others besides Mr. Hamilton may be hiding their light under a bushel. For though some prisons (the convict stations at Parkhurst and Dartmoor were instanced) are said to have excellent libraries of their own, I should judge from enquiry that for the bulk of the prison population my experience in London rather than in Durham is more typical.

One day we shall admit that prison as a punishment never made a man a better citizen. That idea is dawning. Since the war discipline is noticeably relaxed. Talking is allowed at work, and exercise. The daily news is beginning to be broadcast. Men are being treated a little more like men. A good library in every prison will be another step forward. I commend it to every librarian with a prison in his diocese.

¹ Library Association Record, June, 1939, pp. 532-6.

The Library Assistant Inventors Forward!

E. M. Beer

PUBLIC libraries are foundations of the Machine Age. How comes it, then, that in the mechanical world in which they function they have failed to mechanize such a simple process as the sorting of library book-tickets? There is a mechanical charging system upon the market and it has not found general favour; perhaps this has acted as a deterrent to further mechanization; but, to our knowledge, the mechanical sorting of tickets has never been suggested, much less attempted. Yet the benefits of such a system are so obvious and so great—far greater than those of mechanical charging—that they deserve to be stated. “Ça va sans dire, mais ça va encore mieux en le disant.”

To begin with, the process of sorting is entirely barren of further advantage, either to the sorter or to the public. The personal charging system has certain advantages. While taking no more, or less, time than the mechanical system, it offers an opportunity for counter-staff to have brief contact with the library borrowers. Sorting differs from this; it is an end in itself—a dead end from a human view-point. Sorting is in fact a purely mechanical type of process and therefore the more it can be mechanized the better.

Secondly, sorting is a long and tedious process, tiring to eye and hand alike. The purpose of mechanization is to save human labour, and if ever a case for labour-saving can be made, ticket-sorting is a clear case. The hours that are spent in every public library, where the book-ticket of each book issued in a day must be moved, not once, but several times over, before it reaches its correct place in the issue sequence, are indeed a sorry subject for reflection.

Ticket-sorting represents also hours of labour cost. Machinery is usually an expensive investment, and a mechanical sorting system, if invented, would no doubt entail heavy initial expenditure. But it would be a long-term investment, certain to cover its cost and to be an economy in the long run.

The arguments for such a system are unanswerable; but the last word rests still with him who points out that there is no such system. There is not one! Let us, however, not forget that it was librarians who first invented that little wizard, the card catalogue, which has become the giant of filing devices. Is it too much to expect librarians to present the business world with a sorting device?

A limited card-selection machine exists in the Copeland-Chatterson system. This is a system of perforated cards which can be mechanically sorted by the insertion of a rod through significant perforations. It is obvious that the difference between a five-by-three-inch card and the average-sized thin book-ticket are too great to allow of the application of the system outright. If, however, a material could be found that is strong enough and fine enough to permit of very exact perforations on a small area (fifty perforations could represent numbers for a hundred thousand tickets), and also light enough to be fitted inside the cover of a book, it would be possible to have a book-ticket which could be sorted numerically by the mere insertion of a rod through trays of tickets, only in this case the rod must lift free the significant tickets instead of locking them, as in the Copeland-Chatterson system.

The whole machinery for this operation—tickets, sorting-trays and rods—would

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have to be accurate to a point far beyond the measurements of existing apparatus. It would be costly. A new borrower's ticket would have to be designed to match the book-ticket—possibly the book-ticket would be the pocket for the borrower's ticket. Each book-ticket would undergo the same number of sorting processes that it now undergoes by hand. But the manipulation of a rod would assemble the respective thousands, hundreds, tens and units in numerical order more quickly, more accurately, and—in the long run—more cheaply than human hands can do it.

No further suggestion can be offered here. This is not an attempt to invent machinery. It is merely an endeavour to encourage some inventive genius to turn his attention to a problem to which the writer is sure some solution exists to be found. While the projected division between professional and non-professional library staff is still in the air, let our professional brotherhood turn its mind to finding some alleviation of the non-professional duties. Let someone free us from "this dead timber of a desk," that we may attend more fully to "the precious life-blood of a master spirit."

Current Books

MICHAEL BARSLEY. *Common man and Colonel Bogus*. Pilot Press. 7s. 6d.

The adventures of Colonel Bogus and his companions of the Ritzkrieg continue. This time he searches for the common man; and outlines his proposals for the brave new world. Michael Barsley is an inveterate punster, but there is a good deal of seriousness underlying his humour, which, uniquely, combines marxism and laughter.

SIR WILLIAM BEVERIDGE. *Full employment in a free society*. Allen & Unwin. 12s. 6d.

Faced with this amazing work of erudition and industry, one boggles at criticism. Criticism is for experts, but suffice it to say that Sir William has produced a plan revolutionary in its implications and apparently workable in detail. Backed up with a formidable apparatus of notes, appendices and tables, this book is a "must" for all libraries. The publishers are to be congratulated on its production at so moderate a price.

JACK CHEN. *Soviet art and artists*. Pilot Press. 5s.

HERBERT MARSHALL, Ed. *Soviet short stories*.

These two volumes in the life and literature in the Soviet Union series are welcome, for they both provide information unobtainable elsewhere. The artists of the Soviet Union seem to be forming a style of serious realism, with a leaven of humour provided by the cartoonists and book illustrators. In wood engraving especially some delightful work is being done. The volume of short stories is, as we might expect, mainly concerned with the patriotic war; grim and gay, they form a representative collection.

K. K. DOBERER. *United States of Germany*. Lindsay Drummond. 7s. 6d.

In Tyrannos: A symposium. Lindsay Drummond. 16s.

These two books, similar in purpose, are very different in their treatment of German history. Herr Doberer's book attempts to show the "latent desire for federal independence in the German people," and makes proposals for decentralization and the removal of Prussian dominance. *In Tyrannos* is a symposium on various Germans who have upheld the democratic tradition since 1600. The essays are learned and interesting

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with a strong anti-Nazi feeling. The thesis that German thought may be democratic is almost proven ; but the inclusion of an essay on Nietzsche leaves the case a little shaky. The two books taken together are obvious, but necessary, propaganda.

T. L. HORABIN. *Politics made plain.*

SIR BERNARD PARES. *Russia and the peace.* Penguin Books. 9d. each.

Mr. Horabin makes an intelligent and interesting plea for a coalition of the Left in order to defeat the "Tory Dictatorship" at the next election. A vigorous piece of politics, this. Sir Bernard Pares, an expert on his subject, here collects the points of a long lecture tour in the U.S.A., in which he explained the Russian attitude in Europe's problems. Few writers on Russia are more lucid and less partisan. Sir Bernard gives us a brief description of the Russian constitution, the problems of Poland and Germany, and the prospects of her future collaboration as a member of the United Nations. A lucid and uncommonly interesting book, worthy of extensive circulation.

The new syllabus.—The council of the A.A.L. is meeting in the near future to consider the re-organization of correspondence courses in connection with the new syllabus. An announcement will shortly be made.

All enquiries regarding the new syllabus should be sent to the Secretary of *The Library Assistant*, not to the Hon. Education Secretary.